

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 v 1 - 25

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Date: 02 April 2017

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Thank you. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[3 : 42] Amen. Amen. Amen. I make it 30 seconds to go.

And knowing the tendency upon some people to be just a little late, give an extra bit, give them a little while. Well, good evening.

Welcome. Welcome, welcome. Let's turn together to our Bibles for a moment to 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15.

We're not going to be looking at this passage for a few weeks yet, but I want us to think by way of coming to worship, verse 22 through to verse 26.

Verse 22 of 1 Corinthians 15 through to verse 26. Let's listen again to these things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 48] Verse 23. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive, but each in turn. Christ the first fruits, then when he comes, those who belong to him.

Then the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The last enemy to destroy is death. When we speak about Jesus being Lord, and the first hymn in a moment we're going to sing is Jesus shall reign.

What are we thinking about? We're thinking about this truth, which is actually now. It's not that Jesus is our coming king. It is the fact that he is the already arrived king, that he already is the one who has authority.

Notice there. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. He is reigning now. He is ruling. He has authority and power. And the thing that he is doing at this time, up until his return again, is that he is destroying all dominion, authority, and power.

[6 : 06] He is bringing all things, as it were, under his control. He is bringing all things to fulfilment, to the accomplishment, to the purpose that God sent him into the world.

And it's then, when he comes again, that all, as it were, the consummation of all the promises of God. It's then that we shall receive our resurrection bodies. It's then that there shall not be any more death.

But just as everybody who is born of Adam shall die, so everyone who is born of Christ shall have everlasting life. We have a saviour who is working out all things and bringing his kingdom to completion.

And so we have comfort, we have encouragement, we have great reason to rejoice this evening that whatever is happening in the world, our Lord Jesus Christ is ruling on high.

So let's sing together our first hymn, 310, with the assurance. Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run. His kingdom stretch shore to shore till moons shall wax and wane no more.

[7:19] Let's stand and sing, 310. Let's do just that. Let each of us rise and bring our highest honours to the King.

Let us come in prayer. I'll pray briefly and then those who feel able, lead us in prayer as we bring our praises, our thanksgiving to the Lord for all that he's done for us in his grace in Christ Jesus.

Let us pray. O Lord, we thank you that even tonight, that you, Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of our Heavenly Father, the Son of God himself is enthroned, having ascended to the right hand of the glory on high.

We thank you that, Lord Jesus, our lives are under your control and sway. And this world in which we live as well is being shaped and fashioned and controlled, O Lord, to bring about ultimately that day when you shall come again, as we have longed for that day when we shall you will sorrow with the most grievous heartbroken sighs when we oh lord shall enter into resurrection life in all its fullness and resurrection bodies but those oh lord without christ will pass into everlasting sorrow oh lord we long for that day we look for that day we pray oh lord that you would keep us faithful to that day following worshiping trusting oh lord in your grace your goodness and your sovereign power and help us even now this evening that as we bring our worship and praise to you may it be filled with faith and hope in the god who does all things well we ask these things in jesus name amen word of god together now and uh we're in one corinthians and chapter 14 uh we've been studying this letter of paul and uh we've come to 14 last week we looked at that glorious chapter on love and the essential of love the importance of love within the life of the church and uh chapter 14 is continuing paul's theme in the middle of or towards the end of his uh letter where he's dealing with the whole problem of order or rather disorder in the worship of god's people um he's dealt with many problems the church was a very needy church a very troubled church all sorts of divisions and problems we saw that that was the very reason for chapter 13 because love was absent selfishness there was pride there was all sorts of sinful practices going on and uh paul is giving this instruction particularly about how the church is to worship god how we are to uh meet together and uh so chapter 14 we're going to read the first uh 25 verses and look at them uh together this evening god willing if you have the church read the red church bible that's page 1154 1154 in the church bible 1 corinthians 14 follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the spirit especially prophecy for anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to god indeed no one understands them they utter mysteries by the spirit but the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening encouraging and comfort anyone who speaks in the tongue edifies himself or rather edifies themselves the one who prophesies edifies the church i would like every one of you to speak in tongues but even more to prophesy the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues unless someone interprets so that the church may be edified now brothers and sisters if i come to you and speak in tongues what good will i be to you unless i bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds such as the pipe or harp how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes again if the trumpet does not sound a clear call who will get ready for battle so it is with you unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue how will anyone know what you're saying

you will just be speaking into the air undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world yet none of them is without meaning if then i do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying i'm a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker is a foreigner to me so it is with you since you are eager for gifts of the spirit try to excel in those that build up the church for this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may be they may interpret what they say for if i pray in a tongue my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful so what shall i do i will pray with my spirit but i will also pray with my understanding i will sing with my spirit but i will also sing with my understanding otherwise when you are praising god in the spirit how can someone else who is now put in the position of an inquirer say amen to your thanksgiving since they do not know what you're saying you are giving thanks well enough but no one else is edified i thank god that i speak in tongues more than all of you but in the church i would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue brothers and sisters stop thinking like children in regard to evil be infants but in your thinking be adults in the lord is written with other tongues and through the lips of foreigners i will speak to this people but even then they will not listen to me says the lord tongues then are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers prophecy however is not for unbelievers but for believers so if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues and inquirers or unbelievers come in will they not say that you're out of your mind but if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying they're convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare so they'll fall down and worship god exclaiming god is really among you well may the lord help us and give us his wisdom and understanding as we seek to apply his word to ourselves so let's uh turn together then back to one corinthians and chapter 14 if you've got one of the church bibles the red church bible that's page 1154 1154 i'm sure you've had the experience if you're a parent that uh friends and family have bought for your children gifts christmas gifts or birthday gifts or perhaps at other times as well they uh they have brought something around and given something specifically for your young child and uh every gift is a token of their love and token of their care and concern for your family and you appreciate that but not every gift that is given by these folk is always as appreciated as it might be that's because the present though probably a great success with the child isn't always a great success with the parent the child plays with it constantly even insists on taking it to bed with them but for the parent it may not be quite such a popular gift i think you know what i'm getting at those gifts like a drum and a whistle and one of those electronic things that make animal noises that just keeps going on and on and on and on until you until if you're like me with our oldest son the batteries suddenly fell out

[16:12] accidentally even though they needed a screwdriver to be removed now thankfully of course as our children get older and as we get older they get past the enjoyment of simply just making a noise they want something a bit more stimulating something that will uh in one sense help them whether they go to reading or computers or whatever it may be now when we think of the church in corinth the apostle paul reminds us that actually sadly in the church in corinth there are many believers there who really hadn't grown up who really were still very childish spiritually speaking we see that there particularly in verse 20 of this chapter we're looking at chapter 14 verse 20 brothers and sisters stop thinking like children in regard to evil be infants but your thinking be adults now he said this before he said it all the way back in chapter 3 when he spoke to them about them being immature he said there in verse 1 of chapter 3 i could not address you as people who live by the spirit but as people who are still worldly mere infants in christ that was the real problem with the church in corinth that they were spiritually very immature and acting in immature ways which meant had repercussions in the way they reacted to one another and the way that they reacted in the way that they lived and were a witness to the lord and so on and one of the things that marks a child as we've already mentioned really is that childishness means that making a lot of noise is thought of as something great the more noise you can make the better it is and they had stuck in that position they had got to that place where they thought that making noise in their meetings together and as much noise as possible was actually the best thing the most spiritual thing and in fact paul has to rebuke them because they were stuck in the past if i can put it that way stuck in their childhood and uh they needed to mature we've seen that already when he's spoken there in just the earlier chapter verse chapter 13 verse 11 when i was a child i talked like a child i thought like a child i reasoned like a child when i became a man i put the ways of childhood behind me so this is something which is key to our understanding and in this chapter particularly we see that one of the things that the corinthian believers thought was the best gift from god was what paul describes the gift of tongues or speaking in a tongue we'll look at what that means in a little while we know that that's the main problem in the church because he spends this whole chapter just talking about this one gift in fact you can read through virtually every single verse verses 2 4 5 6 13 18 19 20 21 and so on all he mentions is tongues speaking in a tongue and so on now for those of you who've been christians for many time for many years you will know that uh the speaking of tongues what we might call the charismatic gifts is a matter of division within the church i mean the church universal now it's not my uh desire at all in this uh sermon this evening to attack to put down to mock in any way those who believe that speaking in tongues is something for today but i believe that as we have done as we've worked through this book we've come across matters which were close to us matters which were matters of division over various things within the life of the church and in doing so we've come across things which perhaps we wouldn't like look at normally but are important for us to look at and consider and perhaps even uh this evening there are some of us

here who are confused well these charismatic churches and pentecostal churches those who speak in tongues and so on are is that what the bible teaches is it good is it right is it wrong and so on ultimately are these spiritual gifts that paul is talking about in these chapters for today or not now if i had asked that question at almost any time in the past 2 000 years of the church most people would have thought that it was an irrelevant question for the most of the 2 000 years that the church of jesus christ has been on the earth there has been no sign of these spiritual gifts of tongues and so on that paul teaches about particularly in chapter 12 and verses 8 just look at those again to one that's given the spirit of through the spirit a message of wisdom to another a message of knowledge by means of the same spirit to another faith by the same spirit now the gifts of healing by the same spirit to another miraculous powers nor the prophecy another distinguishing between spirits nor the speaking in different kinds of tongues still another the interpretation of tongues apart from a few extreme christian sects as it were cults that have arisen through the time of the church no one thought of these spiritual gifts as having continued after the apostolic age in other words after the age when the apostles were in the church which we have basically in the very first century of first century a.d all those christian writers and and teachers that we revere and look at and read their works even now throughout those 2 000 years believed that these spiritual gifts were uniquely given to the apostles to the early church as in one sense a kickstarter a beginning a help to get the church established and so christians like martin luther john calvin john wesley george whitfield jonathan edwards ch spurgeon and others as well all held to that belief and they based it scripturally they based it upon what we read in chapter 13 here in corinthians where we're told verse 8 where there are prophecies they will cease where there are tongues they will be stilled where there is knowledge it will pass away for we know in part and we prophesy in part but when completeness comes what is in part this appears now as i said up that would be the case for the majority of those 2 000 years but about 100 years ago or just over 100 years ago particularly springing up in america there became a new interest in these spiritual gifts that led to the formation of what we know as the pentecostal churches elim assemblies of god being the most well known and that pentecostal uh understanding of the charismatic gifts the spiritual gifts as were continued really in separation from the rest of the mainstream denominations evangelical denominations and others as well until about the early 1960s when it became what we commonly now call the charismatic movement particularly it was embraced by many anglicans and soon it was reaching into all the denominations uh the mainstream denominations in america and in the uk and other places too and from there came away breakaway churches new churches thought of and called possibly house churches to begin with mostly known now as community churches and they practiced several of these gifts in one corinthians and so indeed that's why we're in the situation where there's confusion where there are many churches a large number of christians who believe

that it's quite normal for tongues prophecy and those spiritual gifts to be exercised in worship and in private and there are others who do not hold to that practice but what are we to believe what are we to believe what are we to do in the light of god's word now i don't want this evening just to be a lecture about whether we have spiritual gifts or not so what i want us to do is to think about what we have been thinking through these chapters is that every single christian has a gift a gift given by the holy spirit and we see that in chapter 12 particularly that all of us have different gifts uh verse 4 of chapter 12 there are different kinds of gifts but the same spirit distributes them different kinds of service but the same lord different kinds of working but in all of them and in everyone it is the same god at work so every single christian don't want anybody to say to me or to that a while you don't believe in the gifts of the holy spirit we do believe in the gifts of the holy spirit and we expect that every one of us has received at least one or more gifts of the holy spirit to minister to serve to work for the lord in whatever capacity and way he wants us to and so i want us in looking at this question of whether these particular spiritual gifts are for today i want us to look as well at our own gifts the gifts that god has given us imparted to us if we're a christian and how they are to be applied and used in the life of this local church the first thing we need to notice is at the start that there are some gifts paul says which are better than others some gifts which are better than others here we have for us uh chapter 14 verse 1 and following follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the spirit especially prophecy for anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to god and then we see the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening encouraging and comfort in chapter 14 paul is particularly comparing the gift of speaking with tongues and i say we'll explain what that means in a moment and prophecy and he's concluding as you see all the way through that prophecy is better than tongues superior and he'll explain to us why he spends quite a long time explaining this because in the church in corinth as we see from this chapter it's clear that the many of the christians thought that tongues was the best gift of all and that they insisted in one sense as we see on speaking in tongues all the time throughout the services throughout their meetings they almost idolized this spiritual gift paul has to say to them in verse 18 i thank god that i speak in tongues more than all of you so he wasn't somebody who was ignorant of the gift but for them it was something which was so important uh more important than anything else now there's a tendency in all of us to run to an extreme position there's a tendency in all of us to to latch on to something to one thing and to make it bigger than perhaps it is that can be a doctrine that can be a particular viewpoint on not just the gifts of the spirit but a viewpoint on the style of worship it can be a particular view on the end times and the return of christ and it can be something which we feel so passionately about that everything else takes second place and we see that as being the only thing the main thing and we're so sure it's the best view and the only view in our minds that we find it defines everything else we do in the life of the church everything else sort of is brought about to make sure that this one thing is lifted high above

them all that's a problem because as evangelical bible believing christians we see that god lays emphasis upon several things several matters and that we are not to be just as it were one trick ponies spiritually speaking just emphasizing the particular gifts of tongues or just emphasizing the return of christ and what it means or just emphasizing this mode of baptism or just emphasizing the use of this particular musical instrument and so on and paul here in this chapter gives us some very helpful principles that should protect us from these things particularly in the matter of gifting spiritual gifting that god has given us and we're to ask ourselves certain questions the first question is this does the gift serve only myself in other words does this gift make me feel good but has very little blessing or effect upon others now this is what paul concludes concerning the gift of tongues what do we mean by it well the gift of tongues the gift of other languages you may also have that in your footnote in your bible that's exactly what it is in the new testament we find that god on the day of pentecost gave to the apostles the gift of being able to speak in a foreign language which was not their native tongue and so we find that amazingly on that day of pentecost it wasn't just peter who's preaching but many others were preaching and speaking and they were sharing with people in their native native language the truth of christ so that three thousand people at the end were converted and saved but as we see it here what is happening is that people are speaking in a foreign language or an unknown language to anybody in the congregation by way of praising or praying to god using words which they don't understand and nobody else understands but express something within them so we see first of all verse two anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to god so tongue they were using this gift of tongues unlike acts which was preaching the gospel they were using it to speak to god in prayer and we see later on in verse 14 if i pray in a tongue my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful so there's a there's an inward sense of the spirit praying and speaking to god with these words which nobody understands not even yourself but it's a sense of releasing unto god praise elsewhere paul of course recognizes that there are times when we do pray with the holy spirit within us and it's it's not in a way that we fully understand the language of so in romans in chapter 8 particularly verse 26 we're told in the same way the spirit helps us in our weakness we do not know we do not know what we ought to pray but the spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans so tongues the gift of the holy spirit in tongues is being used in the church in corinth was being used as a matter between god and the believer or believer and god unintelligible for anybody else as paul makes the point there in verse 19 if in the church i i would rather speak five intelligible words or to instruct others and ten thousand words in the tongue these outbursts of all these different languages all these different sort of voices speaking all these different uh sorts of languages aren't a part of public worship that's what paul is saying they're not for public worship they're not for when god's people meet together if they are to be used he says they're to be used in private

for those who want to express their praise to god in a way that comes from the hearts but for the corinthians of course sadly because we know what they were like we have an idea of their attitude it was a sense of who can shout louder than the other in tongues and if those who didn't speak in tongues were there they were meant to feel less important than the tongue speakers because they were the spiritual elite and so we find again the root problem wasn't it with the corinthians and with us as well have i got a gift that god has given me and i'm using it only for my own benefit it makes me feel good about myself or the second question is this does the gift encourage others now this is paul's point prophecy he says encourages others it edifies others verse three the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening encouraging and comfort unlike tongues remember how back at the start of the chapter in verse one paul encourages us and the believers there that we should use whatever gifts we have for the blessing of others because we love others follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the spirit why desire gifts of the spirit because they're a way of showing love to others caring for others encouraging others strengthening others the gifts that we have are for the blessing of all well what's prophecy then well in this context here particularly it was the god-given ability to explain or to teach or to instruct about god about who he is and what he's done now it's not the same as being a prophet the gift of prophecy here was not the same as being a prophet whereby a prophet would forth tell what was going to happen in the future we know there are prophets in the old testament and the new and they were those who brought clear direction from god to say that this was going to happen or that was going to happen remember elijah it will not rain for three years upon my word elisha and others as well we think of the prophets that we read isaiah jeremiah and others who wrote down what god would bring in way of judgment upon at the city of jerusalem upon the people of god and how god would restore and so on we know that some of these prophets particularly were given uh supernatural power to perform miracles both elijah and elijah uh brought back from the dead a young boy elijah and elisha did various uh miraculous things in one sense authenticating them as the messengers sent from god the apostles received holy spirit power to heal and that preferred provided an authentication to the gospel they were preaching so if you take the healing of the uh the the man at uh the gate beautiful in acts chapter three just listen to what happens while the man held on to peter and john all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called solomon's colonnade when peter saw this he said to them fellow israelites why does this surprise you why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we made this man walk the god of abraham isaac and jacob the god of our fathers has glorified his servant jesus and they go on to proclaim the gospel and of course many are converted and saved so in the church in the new testament particularly god gave to people this spiritual gift to be able to explain

[36 : 27] and to be able to speak about and to declare the truths concerning god including wisdom and knowledge and understanding when god's truth is brought to the whole congregation in the way they can understand there is blessing for everyone that's what paul is saying and paul wanted people to prophesy more than he wanted them to speak in tongues he didn't mind them speaking in tongues in fact he wished that they could all speak in tongues as he did but he saw prophecy as something much better because it encouraged to built up strengthened the church so if we've got a gift and it doesn't have to be a gift of prophecy in the sense of speaking and talking about the things of god but actually we all have the gift of being able to encourage one another don't we we all have the gift of being able to get alongside one another and building one another up and edifying one another and strengthening one another and helping one another and that's where the gifts we've been given are for and as we see and as we know through the rest new testament those gifts can be very physical gifts cooking or baking or cleaning or or some other active caring and they can be very verbal and very loving in one sense not practical but almost just an outpouring of the hearts to speak to comfort to help to love and so on and so paul is making a point here that it is important that the gifts that god gives to us in the church which are an encouragement are gifts which can actually be understood you've got to understand you you aren't encouraged from something that you don't understand it's got to be understood and in verses 6 to 12 we have these three uh illustrations about how spiritual gifts can be understood again comparing tongues to prophecy first of all he speaks about a musical instrument there in the case of a lifeless things that make sounds verse 7 such as a pipe or harp how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there's a distinction in the notes musical instrument does not play music in the hands of anybody put a musical instrument in my hands and it will not play music it will make a loud noise possibly but it will not play music and my mind was drawn back to and i think many of you remember when eric morcom played grieg's piano concerto in g minor on one of his tv shows with andrew previn who he called andrew andre preview and at the end when andre preview said to him that is not grieg's piano concerto he said yes it is it's all the right notes but in the wrong order or not necessarily in the right order yeah give somebody give a child a musical instrument give somebody who has no musical ability a musical instrument and it will make a noise but it won't be very edifying it won't be a blessing and it won't make any sense and so he goes on and talks about the trumpet an army or a military trumpet or bugle it conveys the officer's commands to the troops to attack to go into battle or whatever it may be but again if it's just blurtering out noise and the tune is not distinct it's not clear then nobody will know whether to retreat or advance to go and have their dinner or anything else and then thirdly he speaks about language verse 10 undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world yet none of them is without meaning if then i do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying i'm a foreigner to the speaker all of us have met with folks who speak another language and of course being english we expect them to speak english because uh we're too lazy to learn anybody else's language but of course

we don't understand them and if they don't speak english they don't understand us they're saying something which is perfectly true or perfectly understandable to somebody who understands what they're saying but not to us and vice versa so it must be understood the gifts that we have must be clear they must be understood they must make sense and then we come back to the purpose of these gifts why has god given them as we go on into verses 18 and following what's the target audience why has god given them what are they meant to accomplish and this is where we meet with of course paul's chastisement of them in verse 20 to stop thinking like children start thinking like adults think about what you're doing think about it and that's a very challenging thing for all of us because i think in everything that we do as christians we must understand why we're doing it we're not simply to do things because it's our tradition to do things not simply to do things because well that's what we feel like doing or what we even enjoy doing we have to think seriously about everything that the church does and everything we do as a church does it have a purpose and a meaning and a reason christianity is not unreasonable it is reasonable because it has god's word as our authority and our direction so what are these gifts given for and again there's a comparison between these two tongues and prophecy the one that is a the one that is just a lot of noise that seems impressive and the one that actually does good and edifies now the corinthians it seems by what paul is saying argued that by them all shouting in tongues together it was a real sign to those who were not christians that god was there this was something spectacular strange odd weird and so people would be convinced that god was with them but actually paul says quite the opposite he says when you all speak in tongues verse 23 and you all make this noise and it has no order then actually what will happen when he uses the phrase or the new niv that we've got has inquirers or unbelievers he means are the young believers on the fringe in one sense or those who are not believers at all what will they say they say you're out of your mind these people are all crazy this is crazy this is not god at work this is just babbling nonsense he quotes and looks back to isaiah in chapter 28 where actually what god says there is this that though i speak to people through foreign lips or through tongues they will not listen to my word tongues can only edify the individual believer they cannot be a benefit to the whole church they cannot be a benefit to those who are non-christians either but prophecy can the declaration and the teaching of god's truth is what does the work and what convinces both the unbeliever to come to christ and the believer to be encouraged as he says there in verse 24 if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying he doesn't mean all at the same time because he'll tell us about how we should do it later in other words speaking god's truth they're convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare that they are sinners before a holy god that they've rejected him and so on so they will fall down and worship god exclaiming god is really among you so we need to ask ourselves just as we close really and hopefully this will bring out a little bit of what we understand from this last part of the chapter or the last part of the section are these gifts tongues and supernatural gifts the charismatic gifts as they're often

referred to are they for today are they for the church should we be having them exercised in the church here to answer that question we need to ask ourselves what has changed since that first century when this was written what has changed what is different well it's important for us to understand what paul is talking about when later on in ephesians in chapter two he talks about the fact that the church of jesus christ is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with our lord jesus christ the cornerstone in other words when god began to build the church in the new testament he built it upon two very strong blocks foundation blocks the prophets that's the old testament the apostles the apostles the new testament the prophetic ministry which points to christ and speaks of him in the old testament the apostolic expansion of that and teaching of the things of christ in new testament with of course the lord jesus christ the cornerstone that's the one who brings them both together he's the link our lord jesus christ is a link over the old and the new testament that is the foundation of the church in other words we would not think of for a moment of going back to the old testament prophets would we we would not say well we need therefore to have old testament prophets in our day we need to have the elijah's and elijah's uh prophesying and speaking of things in the future we know that that was part of god's process in taking his kingdom forward now so likewise it is for the apostles and their ministry once the foundation has been laid those particular gifts and ministries are no longer required they've done their work they've established the church and god moves on to build his church with different materials different ministries so as we've already seen the apostles and the prophets exercised miraculous gifts of healing to authenticate the gospel to authenticate the message but its power to convince now the gospel to the church is not through outward signs but through inward conviction here's what paul writes concerning the one the christians in thessalonica when you receive the word of god which you heard from us that's the gospel proclaimed you accepted it not as the word of men but as it actually is the word of god which is at work in you in other words they were not convinced that this was the word of god because there was a miracle that took place but they accepted as the word of god because as we know the holy spirit of god convinced them that this was the truth of the things of god the prophetic ministry of bringing fresh revelation and truth from god was necessary until the church had the complete bible and so the prophecy particularly that we're thinking about here in one corinthians 14 explaining and opening up the things of christ and of god was a ministry until the word of god was brought and i think in part that is spoken of there in one corinthians 13 we've read it already where there are prophecies they will cease tongues they will be stilled knowledge it will pass away we know in part we prophesy in part but when completeness comes what is in part disappears we have the complete and full word of god the full revelation of god to us in this age is in the scriptures we do not need apostles and prophets to start bringing fresh new things about god because everything we need to know about him has been written down so once the gospels were written once the letters were written down there's no longer need for prophetic gifts or words of knowledge words of wisdom and so on we still need of course the holy spirit's help to understand god's word

we know that he equips and he helps us to do just that it's a spiritual work that we all have been gifted with to be able to grasp the word of god and so for the matter of tongues it seems to me that when we read new testament the only place where tongues are used in the sense of foreign languages to proclaim the gospel it's on that day of pentecost and only in the book of acts do we find them appearing at all and therefore i think it's only right for us to conclude as god's word teaches us they were a temporary thing for a time can i just add before we close a very personal word to this some of you will know this already when i was first converted the age of 18 i was converted in a pentecostal church for several years i was involved in the charismatic movement i spoke in tongues i gave what i thought were words of wisdom knowledge and so on and for it took a long time for me to under god's word to work through what was going on to work through whether these things were the work of the spirit or not now personally for myself after many years several years i came to the conclusion which i believe the lord helped me to through his word that these uh speaking in different languages in prayer and so on was really the outpouring of my own imagination it wasn't that god the holy spirit had given me a foreign language to speak it was my own exuberance excitement desire to worship and to praise god and that the other words which i thought were words of knowledge or prophecy or so on were really again from my own imagination wanting to say to people the lord is with you it sounds much better if i can say god has said the lord is with you it was all i think well intentioned and i would have to say again i believe many of our brothers and sisters in christ who are involved in the charismatic movement are dear brothers and sisters in christ whose hearts are in the right place but i do not believe that all of them are taught well and i think that some of these things can be a great distraction and unhelpful to the work of christ in this world so i don't want you to think that i'm simply saying things out of resentment because of how i was saved i thank god because it's through a pentecostal church i came to hear the gospel and was saved and i don't want us to think in any way that somehow these brothers and sisters in christ are evil or wicked i think unfortunately there are some particularly in places of leadership some of the things that go on are in fact doing harmful things and are not godly people but that's not true of all and i don't think we should think that way either so let's conclude we're thinking about gifts in the church first of all it's clear that we should seek and pray for the lord to give us greater gifts to serve let's not be satisfied with the gifts we have let's not just say well of course you know that's that's me this is who i am this is the gifts i've got i i can't possibly expect to have other gifts who knows paul makes it very clear that we are to eagerly desire gifts of the spirit lord give me greater gift of encouragement give me a greater desire and ability to pray give me oh lord greater understanding of your word etc etc help me to serve in sacrificial ways and so on secondly the gifts that we already have you trust we're to use for the common good whoever you are dear friend you have been gifted by god to be a blessing to the church and you may think well that's unimportant or i'm unimportant but every gift is important and every one of us needs to use those gifts and be motivated by love thirdly if god has

gifted us if i can put it this way speaking to myself and others the lord has given us gifts which are more public than others let us not think of ourselves more highly than we should every gift that is given to us is given by the lord as he chooses as he determines not because we are good clever better more holy and so on and let me finally re-emphasize god has given his holy spirit to each of us and it is through the gifts he's given us that he will work in his church he has if i can put it this way no other way to work except through us that's his choice he can of course and he does sovereignly work whatever he chooses but he is purposed and chosen to work through you and me to extend his kingdom to fulfill his purposes to save sinners and to bring men and women into faith that's why that last verse is so important where we see so they will fall down and worship god exclaiming god is really among you how will they do that because they see that we are those who are god's people and the gifts that we have been given are being used for his glory let's just spend a moment then in prayer let's ask the lord to help us to use the gifts he's given us and let's ask the lord to give us more gifts that we might be more useful in his kingdom let's do that in the quietness of our hearts and then we'll sing our closing hymn now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than all we ask or even imagine according to his power that is at work within us to him be glory in the church and in christ jesus throughout every generation now and forevermore amen